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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 MOSCOW 012751

SIPDIS

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DEPT FOR EUR/RUS

EO 12958 DECL: 11/29/2016  
TAGS PGOV, KDEM, PREL, PINR, RS  
SUBJECT: LITVINENKO ASSASSINATION: REACTION IN MOSCOW  
REF: MOSCOW 11490

Classified By: Ambassador William J. Burns: 1.4 (d).

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Summary  
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¶1. (C) The November 23 death by radiation poisoning of former FSB agent Aleksandr Litvinenko in London has spawned a welter of conspiracy theories.

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Make Putin Stay  
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¶2. (C) Independent radio station Ekho Moskvy Editor-in-Chief Aleksey Venediktov, like many here, linked the murders of Litvinenko and journalist

¶3. (C) Venediktov pegged the two assassinations to rogue or retired FSB or military intelligence agents controlled by forces either within or

¶4. (C) Venediktov did not exclude the possibility that the culprit in Litvinenko's poisoning may have been ex-FSB agent turned businessman And

¶5. (C) In a separate conversation November 30, the Moscow Heritage Foundation's Yevgeniy Volk seconded the version of events offered by Venediktov.

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Make Putin Play  
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¶6. (C) Stanislav Belkovskiy, political analyst from the National Strategic Institute also linked the Politkovskaya and Litvinenko killings, but

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and force him to sacrifice someone from his inner circle in order to salvage his reputation. Belkovskiy thought that victim would be President Putin.

¶7. (C) The victims to date, Politkovskaya and Litvinenko, had been selected because they were better known beyond Russia's borders, where it was

¶8. (C) Belkovskiy offered in support of his theory what he said was indirect proof of XXXXXXXXXXXX involvement. Belkovskiy told us he had been

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Make Putin Stay  
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¶9. (C) The Institute for Globalization Problem's Mikhail Delyagin added the November 18 killing in Moscow of Movdali Baysarov, Chechen "Gorets

¶10. (C) According to Delyagin, the killings of Baysarov, Politkovskaya, and Litvinenko combine to create an atmosphere of chaos desired by the  
SIPDIS killing. Delyagin joined Venediktov and Belkovskiy in seeing the polonium as the calling card of someone in Moscow.

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¶11. (C) -----  
No Theory Suffices  
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¶12. (C) In a December 1 conversation, the Carnegie Moscow Center's Masha Lipman cautioned against falling prey to conspiracy theories. None of  
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been forced would surely seek revenge if compelled by circumstances he did not create to remain. With little information available, the only theories

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Postscript  
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¶13. (C) The sense of unease here only deepened with news that former Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar had been poisoned November 24 while attending

¶14. (C) Masha Lipman believed that the well-connected Chubais's early certainty that Gaidar had been poisoned might mean that he knows, or has

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Comment  
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¶15. (C) All of the above putative versions of events are handicapped by a lack of evidence and by the existence of other motives for the killings.